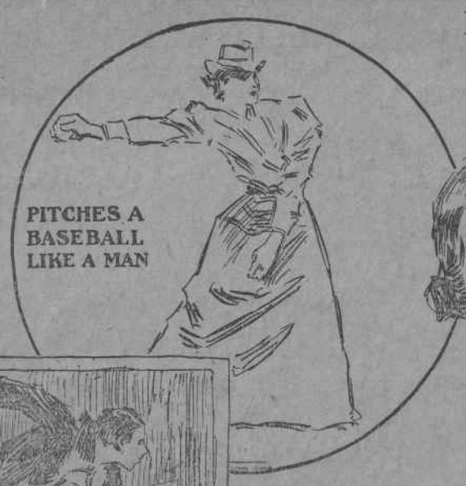
IS SHE CHAMPION OF GREATER NEW YORK?

A School Girl Who Has Cleared the Bar at 6 Feet 1 Inch,

And Beats the Record of the Average College Athlete.



A BROOKLYN LASS WITH A RECORD A MAN MIGHT ENVY.

SIX feet and one inch is a fine record for a running high jump, and for a woman it is extraordinary.

It has been made by a seventeen-year-old Brooklyn schoolgirl. The world's amateur record is at present held by M. F. Sweeney, with 6 feet 5⅝ inches. Ten years ago the best man could not beat the jump of 6 feet and 1 inch made by Miss Louise Brooks. In 1887 the record for the United States was held by E. W. Johnson, with only 5 feet 11 inches.

Miss Brooks is the daughter of George W. Brooks, the well-known manufacturer, and is the champion feminine athlete of Adelphi Academy. For eight years she has been a pupil in that school and an enthusiast in athletics and gymnastics. She easily carries off the palm as the best all-round athlete in a large class of girl gymnasts, and her powers and endurance, her grace and agility, are simply marvellous.

Miss Brooks comes of a family of athletes. She is the only daughter among six children. Her five brothers are all athletes and her eldest brother was a champion of Amherst during his college life. From a tiny girl Miss Louise loved outdoor sports better than the pastimes usually sought by little maids. Tops, marbles and ball were her toys instead of dolls and miniature dishes and housekeeping utensils. She learned to throw a ball like a boy—a clean, straight throw—instead of in the curiously lame fashion which most girls adopt. She grew up a sturdy, straight-limbed maiden with well developed muscles. When she went to the academy she took to the gymnasium as a duck takes to water.

From the ordinary course of gymnastics she passed to more difficult feats. Trapeze, swinging rings, parallel bars and jumping she conquered one after the other, growing constantly in grace and suppleness, until today she is the acknowledged all-around champion of the school, praised by the physical instructor and adored by her classmates.

If you ask for Miss Brooks at her home ten to one you will be told she is at the Adelphi playing field, near Classon avenue, between Park place and Prospect Park. The field, which is about ten minutes' walk from the academy, contains ball fields, tennis courts, running tracks and a grand stand with seats for 250 persons. Underneath the grand stand are dressing rooms with lockers and bathrooms. Here the fair young champion and her chums go early in the morning, take their luncheon and stay all day, playing ball, tennis or riding their wheels.

It was here I found Miss Brooks one day last week. When I asked for her, from a group of rosy-cheeked, glorious-eyed young Hebes, there stepped forth a young girl in plain black skirt, shirt waist, Alpine hat and a jaunty jacket, into whose pockets her hands were thrust in boyish fashion. Miss Brooks is 5 feet 6 inches, weighs 150 pounds, wears a good, sensible 6½ shoe, and draws on her strong, white hands 6¼ gloves. She has frank blue eyes, fair hair, parted in the middle, without the suspicion of anything so frivolous as bangs or crimps, drawn smoothly back and braided in schoolgirl fashion. She has a straight nose, good mouth, even white teeth, and a color like the blush on a nice, hard Fall apple. She is extremely diffident about her achievements, and it is only by repeated questioning that one can get any information from her.

"Yes, I made quite a jump for a girl," she said. "How much was it, Sophie?" turning to one of the young goddesses who stood by.

"Now Brooks, you know it was a perfectly splendid jump. Six feet and one inch," triumphantly cried the other.

"What was the position you took?"

"This," and the girl slightly bent her supple body, raising and extending the arms a little and closing the hands. "Why, it's nothing. Any one can do it with practice. Besides, I do not think I am much of a jumper. I am better at handball, which is really quite an unusual sport for girls, and at the parallel bars."

"Now, Brooks, what is the use of your being so modest?" cried one of the girls. "She can do anything—she's perfectly wonderful. She rides beautifully—you just ought to see her ride a boy's wheel—and she's a crack tennis player and no one can beat her in the gymnasium."

"Will you let me see you throw and catch a ball?"

"Why, yes, if you wish," said the girl athlete, good-humoredly. "Here, Phil, pitch me the ball."

She moved to the field where two young fellows were pitching and tossing ball. Taking her place, she settled her Alpine hat a little more firmly over her blonde braids and flung the ball as resolutely and with as unerring an aim as either of the boys who tossed it back to her.

"Handball is one of the best games there is," said Miss Brooks on returning to the grand stand. "You see, it develops both sides of the body and exercises arms and legs alike."

"You bike, of course?"

"Oh, yes; I am just going to get into my bloomers for a ride on one of the boys' wheels."

She disappeared for a few moments and presently came back looking like a sturdy boy. She had discarded her Alpine hat and was bareheaded. She selected a high boy's wheel, mounted it with admirable dexterity and was off.

I never saw anything like Miss Brooks's mounting. There was no hop, skip and jump, no floundering, no grasshopper-like contortions. She simply threw one leg over her wheel, even as a cavalryman throws his leg over his prancing steed. And there she was.

And how she rode! Flying round the course like a race horse, she came on down the homestretch, cheeks glowing, eyes flashing, yellow braid and black ribbon bobbing in the wind.

"Isn't she lovely?" said the girl who sat by my side watching her. "I tell you, we are all proud of her. And I wish you could see her dance. She dances as beautifully as she does everything else. And she makes the most delicious fudge, and she's president of the B. G. V. G's.

"What is fudge and what is the B. G. V. G.?"

"My!" said the girl, with a commiserating smile; "don't you know what fudge is? It's candy and it's made in a chafing dish. Brooks knows how to work the chafing dish capitally."

"Miss Brooks, what do you love better than athletics?"

"Why, nothing," with a little surprised smile.

Miss Brooks goes to Smith College this fall, where she will devote herself as much to athletics as to study.

A MAN WHO OVERCOMES GRAVITATION TELLS HOW TO DO IT.

THE law of gravitation is a mere bugaboo to Laroche. He has overcome it, and now he laughs at the mysterious, undefined force which holds most people in dread of high places.

Laroche has come nearer than any other man who ever lived to the mastery of that hitherto unsolvable problem of how to lift yourself over the fence by your own boot straps.

Laroche is the muscular little man who when wonder after wonder is dazzling the eyes and confounding the credulity of the thousands of onlookers at Barnum & Bailey's circus, comes out and tucks himself away inside a perforated and gilded metal ball, which forthwith begins a slow and silent and almost uncanny journey up the incline of a lofty spiral, pausing only when it has reached a height of twenty feet above terra firma. Then after a moment of utter stillness come the flame and smoke and loud detonation of pistol shots, and the Stars and Stripes, waved by an invisible hand, are flaunting from the ball's shining surface.

Laroche, the night before the circus left Brooklyn for Baltimore, explained and illustrated to the Sunday Journal in the great tented dressing room of the show the way in which his marvel is wrought and told the whole story of its devising.

The ball was brought in, a shining sphere of galvanized steel, weighing only forty-six pounds, and perforated with holes half an inch in diameter. This hollow conveyance measures only twenty-six inches through, but little Laroche, by creasing his legs and telescoping his torso, manages to arrange himself inside so that his feet and hands are free, and about an inch or two of latitude is allowed for the movement of his body forward and back. His arms are bent, and his hands rest at his sides, palms outward. After getting into the lower half of the ball he lifts the covering half down upon himself, and fastens it with a series of sliding bolts inside. These are so arranged, however, that they can be slipped from the outside if anything ever happens to incapacitate him.

Then the work begins, and hard work it is, too. When he starts out upon his journey Laroche's back is to the incline. He draws his hands back as far as possible and plants them against the sides, or rather the bottom of the ball. Then he draws his feet toward him, up under him, and throws all the weight of his head and body backward.

That starts the ball rolling. It is the incomprehensible thing, next, to discover how the sphere is held in place while he is putting his hands back for a fresh hold. He says, in explanation of this, that he keeps his body pressed backward, and, when resting in that posture, the ball stands still. The application of that constant pressure constitutes a force sufficient to overcome the gravitation. The work of the hands is necessary only when propulsion is needed.

And it is not, strictly speaking, the hands alone that are used. The whole forearm and the elbows are pressed against the ball. Laroche's elbows are calloused from the friction, although he wears upon them thick multiple bandages of wool, enforced with rubber.

"At each reach with my hands," he said, "I get them back about seven inches. That gives me purchase enough to send the ball along about a foot. It is easy enough until I get up to about the fourth turn. Then I begin to get tired, and from that point up the ascent is a struggle.

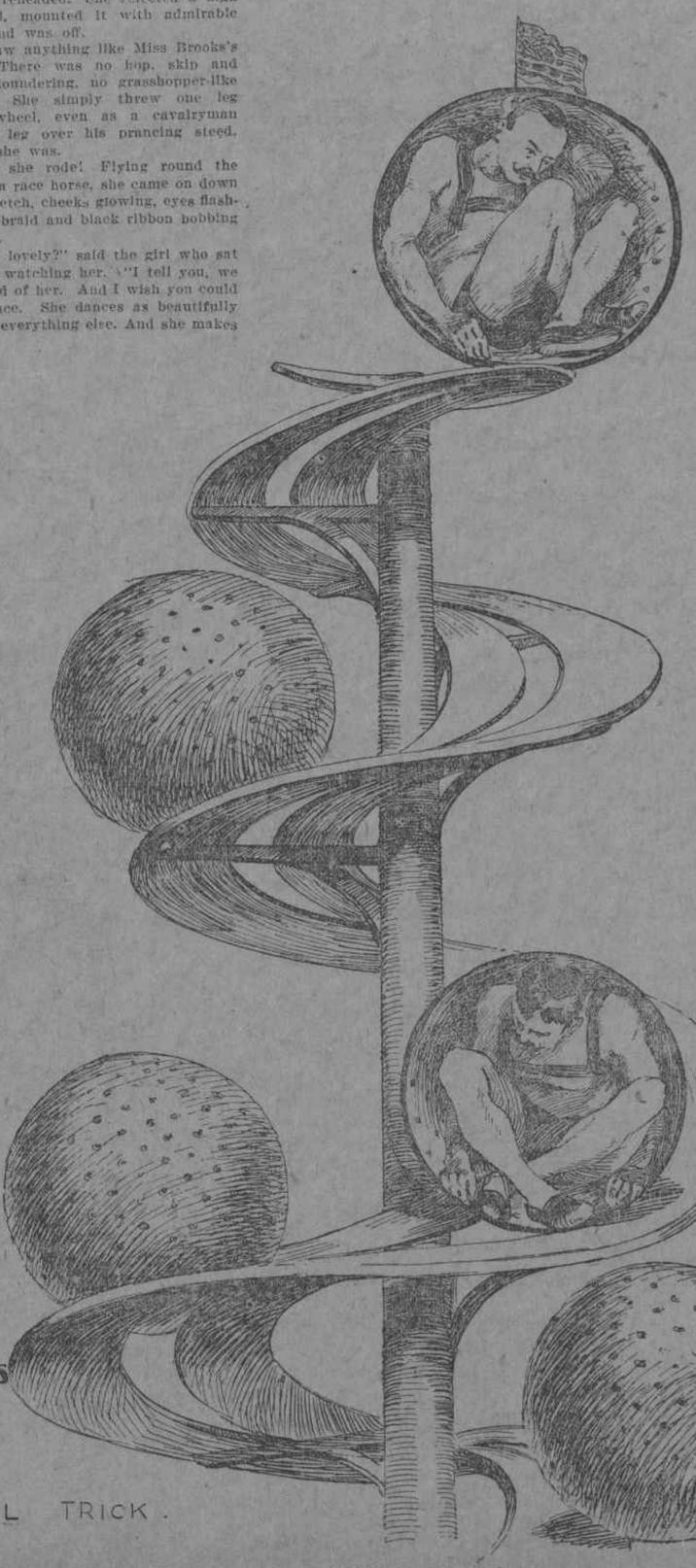
"People think that the ball and I move together. If we did, of course the thing would be impossible. I make the ball move around me, and during all the transit, both up and down, I maintain an upright posture. In descending, the motion is reversed. I keep the pressure backward to prevent the ball from running away with me, and apply what release force is necessary with my feet."

"Have you never had a fall?"

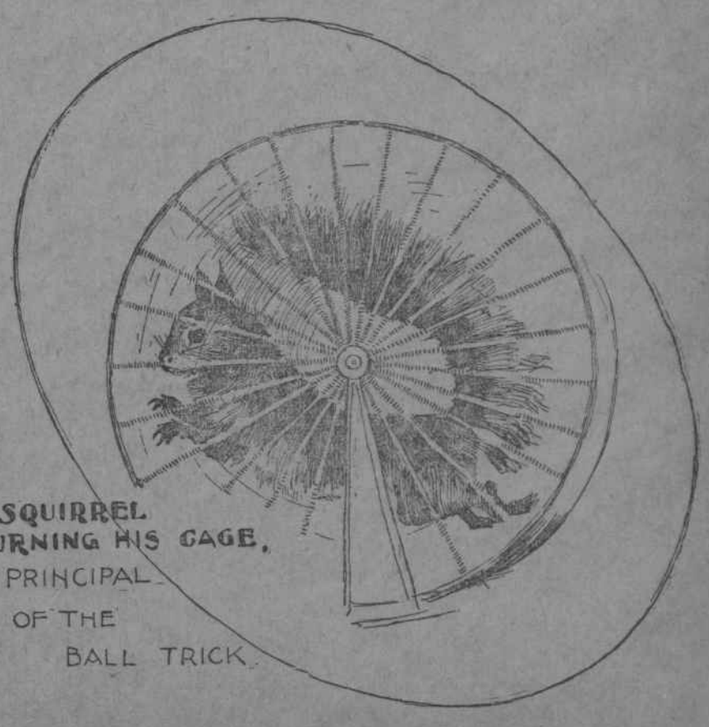
"Only once. That was in Tours, in France. I had gotten up to the top, just at the turn from the spiral on to the little platform where I rest before going down. The light was bad, and I misjudged my position. The edge of the rail canted me off, and down I went. Fortunately it was a soft sawdust ring, but even at that I was a wreck for several days. Every muscle in my body was sore as a boil."

"I was a bareback rider once," he said. "I discovered that the time was not far off when I would be numbered among the 'has beens,' and I set about finding some act that should be all my own and that would give me a living when my hair got thinner and my bareback days were over. I had an acquaintance, a sleight-of-hand man, who went about in saloons and restaurants doing tricks and passing the hat. He had what he called 'the educated eggs.' He would lay them on a table, and hold a lighted candle up in front of them, and they would follow the light about with what seemed like almost human intelligence. They were a mystery to everybody. Well, one night he told me how he did it. He had blown the eggs and put a couple of bugs inside of them. The shells being thin the light shone through, and the bugs naturally followed the light. Climbing up the sides of the egg they changed the centre of gravity, and the egg rolled along at a great rate.

"Now, I said, if bugs can do that, why can't a man do it on a larger scale? I tried it first with a barrel and discovered that I could propel it along the ground without any difficulty. Then I experimented with rolling it up a plank. That was easy, and I took to coming down the incline, and that was easy, too."



THE BUGS IN THE EGGS
THE GENESIS OF THE BALL TRICK.



THE SQUIRREL TURNING HIS CAGE,
THE PRINCIPAL OF THE BALL TRICK.

THE TRICK
SHOWING HOW THE MAN IN THE BALL KEEPS IT MOVING - EITHER UP OR DOWN.